

**Minutes**  
**King County Rural Forest Commission**  
**June 11, 2003**  
**Preston Community Center**

*Commissioners present:* Ken Konigsmark, Fred McCarty, Doug McClelland, Dave Warren

*Commissioners absent:* Jean Bouffard, Gordon Bradley, Rudy Edwards, Steve Ketz, Bill Kombol, Matt Mattson

*Exofficio members:* Mike Reed, Randy Sandin, Karen Wolf

*Staff:* Kathy Creahan, Kristi McClelland, Benj Wadsworth

*Guests:* Lee Kahn, Julie Keough

Doug McClelland called the meeting to order at 10:00 am.

Julie Keough introduced herself. She is the Cascade/Vail manager for Weyerhaeuser and is sitting in for Steve Ketz. Steve is stepping down from the Commission due to his changing role at Weyerhaeuser and Weyerhaeuser's changing ownership in King County. Julie is not sure that Weyerhaeuser is the appropriate large landowner to serve on the Commission. Rather, it might make sense to have a representative from Hancock – perhaps Julie Stangel, the communications manager.

### **Minutes Approval**

There was not a quorum present to approve the May meeting minutes.

### **Staff Report**

Benj presented proposals to the Conservation Futures Citizen Oversight Committee to acquire development rights on the Striker Forest in the Rock Creek Valley and on the Cedar Falls Tree Farm near North Bend. Councilmember Carolyn Edmunds was present during the presentation at Cedar Falls Tree Farm and heard the message about the importance of conserving small family forests.

The Forestry Program has continued to explore the feasibility of a “local wood marketing” effort. Following the May RFC meeting, a sub-committee gathered and decided to spend the summer talking with potentially interested groups and hold a larger meeting in October. Benj

attended a meeting of the Northwest Cooperative Development Center, a non-profit that promotes cooperative efforts in a variety of industries. They are interested in promoting forestry cooperatives and have applied for a Weyerhaeuser Foundation grant to hold three 3-day workshops around the state.

The Forestry Program is working with the Cascade Land Conservancy on the Cedar-Green Initiative, an effort to acquire development rights on industrial timberland in the Cedar and Green River watersheds. The contract with CLC states that they will consult with the RFC for input regarding actions taken as part of the initiative. The Cedar-Green Initiative is part of the larger "Many Rivers Initiative" that extends beyond King County. Doug suggested that CLC should present to the RFC as soon as possible.

The Friends of Rock Creek have completed the second draft of their Conservation Plan. The Friends are hoping to get feedback on the plan this summer from various constituent groups and then have a public meeting in the fall. Benj will plan a presentation before the RFC.

The Natural Resources Parks and Open Space Committee is planning to confirm the new Commission members at their June 19 meeting. Forestry staff will be giving an update about the forestry program. Ken commented that Rudy Edwards has a new job with the USFS, so Benj might want to check on his status with the Commission.

Kristi recently conducted a trial "Walk in the Woods," an effort to educate volunteer leaders about forest ecology and the forestland issues that King County is facing. The goal of the Walk in the Woods program is to build capacity by ensuring that everyone is giving the same message about forests and forestry. Kristi is in the process of creating a written document that will summarize the points made during the Walks. She will run a draft by the RFC. Doug suggested that various Commission members could help with the Walks. Dave Warren commented that he has planned a Walk in the Woods on October 4 on Vashon with Jerry Franklin, Andy Carey, Chris Mazer and Dean Berg. Kristi will be doing another Walk tomorrow night (June 12) with the Land and Water Stewards.

Benj distributed the latest draft of the Programmatic Plan for Managing King County-owned Forestland. The RFC reviewed it earlier. It has not changed much, but this is the last chance for the RFC to review it.

## **2004 Comprehensive Plan Revision**

Karen Wolf provided a summary of the revision process. The Executive will transmit a draft of the plan to Council in March 2004. At this point, Karen is meeting with constituent groups.

The public review draft will be completed in October, with formal public meetings to follow. Karen distributed the scope of work that the Council passed. The most significant proposal from the Commission's standpoint is a request from Council member Philips to "review forest policies and study recent trends to determine if additional measures are needed to ensure continued forest production in the Forest Production District." In 2000, there was a proposal in the draft that included four different measures:

- Any homes built in the FPD must have a forest management plan.
- Permanent clearing is limited to 3 acres.
- Any new residence will need a fire management plan.
- New residential lots in the FPD will be prohibited, but residential development will be allowed on existing lots.

Due to ongoing negotiations over the Snoqualmie Tree Farm, the restriction on development on new lots was omitted from the final draft of the 2000 plan and replaced with a standstill agreement between Weyerhaeuser, Plum Creek and King County. The agreement stated that Weyerhaeuser and Plum Creek would not subdivide any of their land before June 30, 2002, giving the County time to complete a study of options to keep the FPD in forest production.

The purchase of the Snoqualmie Tree Farm by the Evergreen Forest Trust did not occur, and Karen wonders if it makes sense to revisit potential regulations as part of the 2004 Comp Plan revision.

Benj distributed an excerpt from the results of an internal study that Lori Grant completed in 2002 outlining eight potential responses to the FPD issue. He also displayed a map showing all of the parcels in the FPD that have been segregated since 2000. 28 parcels in 2000 became 72 parcels in 2003. The total acreage impacted is 7560 acres. The map also shows all of the parcels with pending building or clearing/grading permits. 47 permits have been filed in the FPD since 2000.

Doug McClelland explained the situation with some of the segregated parcels, which probably do not involve residential development. The map may look worse than it really is. Benj will do some additional research to sort out what's really occurring. Doug suggested the need to discuss this with the major landowners to ensure that regulations won't interfere with productive negotiations that may be underway. Doug suggested that the map should also show change of ownership where segregation has not necessarily occurred. He wonders what the implication of large ownership changes might be. He also wonders what other Counties are doing to protect their productive forestlands, and if zoning is the ultimate solution. Karen commented that zoning might be the only solution in the near term, as the money is not available to purchase all of the development rights. Doug suggested that the RFC should invite someone to present about the

trends in forest ownership statewide. He has heard that timber investment organizations are likely to hold the land for five or ten years, not for the long term as the timber companies have done in the past. For that reason, they are likely to fight any regulations that would decrease the value of the land.

Julie Keough commented that due to federal tax laws it is more advantageous for pension funds to hold large tracts of forestland than it is for forest product corporations. The trend of pension funds acquiring forestland may be partly attributed to the recent declines in the stock market or to the low value of timber – it is a great time to buy timberland as an investment, but there are better real-estate investment vehicles if residential development is the goal. Ken commented that this would suggest that the timber investment organizations might not fight additional regulations. He commented that everyone has got to agree that it is important to keep the FPD in large ownerships. Julie commented that Hancock has expressed a great deal of interest in selling conservation easements. Doug asked who might be able to educate the RFC on this topic. Julie will look into it. Benj commented that the Yale Forest Forum recently published the results of a seminar on this topic. He will distribute via e-mail.

Karen suggested that one option might be for the County to preserve the development rights for transfer purposes only. However, it would be difficult to value the land on this basis. Fred asked if the goal was to prevent small family forest owners from purchasing 80 acres to build their house and manage the rest of their land as forest. Doug emphasized that the best use of large landscapes like the Snoqualmie Tree Farm would be to keep them in large ownerships. Dave Warren suggested that the tax laws will eventually change, and the County just needs to keep the land undeveloped in the meantime. Doug suggested that maybe another standstill agreement would be appropriate. He feels that a zoning change might cause more problems than it solves. He emphasized the need to talk with Hancock.

Ken expressed concern about another section of the scope that states the need to “research ways to improve the rural economic development and employment opportunities in the rural area.” He knows of nobody in the rural area complaining about the lack of economic development and is concerned that this section is a response to pressure from those who want to develop in the Rural Area. He feels that this could have an impact on forestland and the RFC should comment on it. Kathy clarified that the section is really about studying if there are appropriate home occupations that are currently prohibited but might be compatible with the rural lifestyle. As an example, sawmills are not currently allowed in the Rural Area but should be.

Kathy Creahan commented that the staff needs to develop a proposal regarding residential development in the FPD. Doug suggested that there needs to be a collaborative effort with the

large landowners. He would not support a recommendation from staff to limit residential development if the large landowners are not involved in the discussion.

### **Field Trip**

Benj suggested that the RFC co-host a field trip to Vashon Island in July. The Vashon Forest Stewards are moving ahead with the thinning on Agren Park, which should begin on July 15. The field trip would showcase that it is possible to generate revenue from timber harvest while restoring the forest health in a park. It might also be possible to look at the land that is proposed for Trust Land transfer from WADNR to King County, and also the proposed site in the industrial area that the Stewards are proposing to use as a log yard. The hope is that Executive Sims would attend along with members of the Natural Resources, Parks and Open Space Committee. Dave and Benj will set a date and work on planning. Doug suggested that it would be good to invite the new Council member from south County.

### **Top 10 Small Forest Landowners**

Benj has been working on an air-photo analysis to identify the small privately owned forests in the Rural Forest Focus Areas and the FPD that the Forestry Program should be targeting with outreach efforts and possibly acquisition efforts. He has developed a list of approximately 75 properties. Benj is seeking input as to what the criteria should be for narrowing down the list. Ken commented that the properties ought to be evenly distributed geographically. Doug suggested that it would make sense to produce a flier with pictures that tells the story of each parcel – why it is important, threatened, etc.

Benj distributed an excerpt from the Farm and Forest Report that calls for the County to “identify immediately and preserve critical rural forestlands, and target a reserve of properties ultimately meriting preservation.” It includes an appendix that outlines the need to preserve wetlands, stream corridors, wildlife corridors, viewsheds and other qualities. All agreed that it is important to address these concerns. Doug commented that the reason that the RFC wants to address the “top 10 small forest landowners” is that small forest properties in general are slipping through the cracks with all of the attention on the industrial owners. He feels that a top 10 list will help raise awareness about the issues facing all of the small forest landowners.

### **Next Meeting**

Wednesday, August 13, 10:00 – 12:00, Preston Community Center. Suggested agenda items: presentation by CLC about the Many Rivers initiative, presentation by Friends of Rock Creek

about their Conservation Plan, continued discussion of FPD Comp Plan issues, Update about Critical Areas Ordinance, presentation about draft WRIA 7 Conservation Plan.